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ON WAR'S PRECIPICE:  
OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CRISES

by

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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

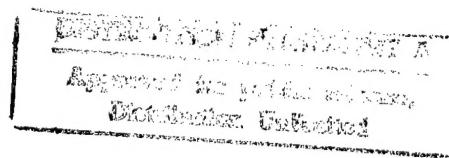
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15. Abstract:  Limited Post Cold War interventions of the kind seen in Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda, Northern Iraq and Bosnia--once regarded as anomalies--have increased in frequency. While these situations are the most complicated and volatile in which to intervene, they have also become the most prevalent and recurrent. Perhaps by default, the operational leaders who are immersed in these crises have become the indispensable on-scene stewards of American foreign policy and military strategy world-wide. The successes and failures of our nation's past interventions have been due in large measure to the performance of our operational commanders directly engaged in these crisis zones. This discourse argues that crises are not just chaotic events, but have definite phases which can be positively influenced toward a desired outcome. This analysis further argues that discerning and influencing the transition points between these phases of crises is a crucial skill of operational leadership which has historically proven elusive. The operational commander's ability to influence these phases, moreover, is dictated largely by his mastery of a series of systemic and intuitive leadership imperatives vital to successful crisis management. It is the commander on the ground, now more than ever before, who is the crucial deciding factor between resolution or escalation, and success or failure.			
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## ON WAR'S PRECIPICE: OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CRISES

Until recently, wars were largely decided by the application of overwhelming force and maneuver; yet today, the ways, means and ends of winning wars are at once more complex, politically charged, volatile and often unconventional in nature. Regardless of how an activity is now classified, whether it is called crisis diplomacy, military operations other than war (MOOTW), "postmodern conflict"<sup>1</sup> or low intensity conflict (LIC), the indispensable and defining common denominator of each rests in the operational commander on the scene. It is his perception of the situation and his leadership which remains, more than ever before, the crucial deciding factor between resolution or escalation, and success or failure.

Limited Post Cold War interventions of the kind seen in Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda, Northern Iraq and Bosnia-- once regarded as anomalies-- have increased in frequency and have served to blur the distinction between what is war and what is not. The "zero-sum" environment which has traditionally defined conventional warfare has given way to these new, variable-sum games for which there are no easily discernible solutions. Perhaps by default, the operational leaders who are immersed in these crises have become the indispensable on-scene stewards of American foreign policy and military strategy world-wide.

This paper examines the emergent challenges which have continued to confront commanders in these new "postmodern" environments. It identifies a series of leadership "imperatives" derived from past crisis interventions that significantly influenced their outcome. This paper contends that the successes and failures of our nation's past interventions have been due in large measure to the performance of our operational commanders directly engaged in these "crisis zones." Finally, two conceptual frameworks are introduced to illustrate the causal dynamics of crises and the influence exercised by the operational commander during a crisis intervention. The first (Figure 1) focuses on crisis itself, expressing it as a

cyclic process composed of four separate and distinct operational phases. This analysis contends that discerning (and influencing) the transition points between these phases is a crucial skill of operational leadership which has historically proven elusive. The second model (Figure 2) seeks to clarify the relationship between those systemic and intuitive elements of leadership which are required during each phase of a crisis as it evolves.

### I. CRISIS & PRE-INTERVENTION OPERATIONS

**CRISIS:** *A crisis is an incident or situation involving a threat to the United States, its territories, citizens, military forces, and possessions or vital interests that develops rapidly and creates a condition of such diplomatic, economic, political or military importance that commitment of U.S. military forces and resources is contemplated to achieve national objectives.*

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"There is always a crisis before there is a solution"

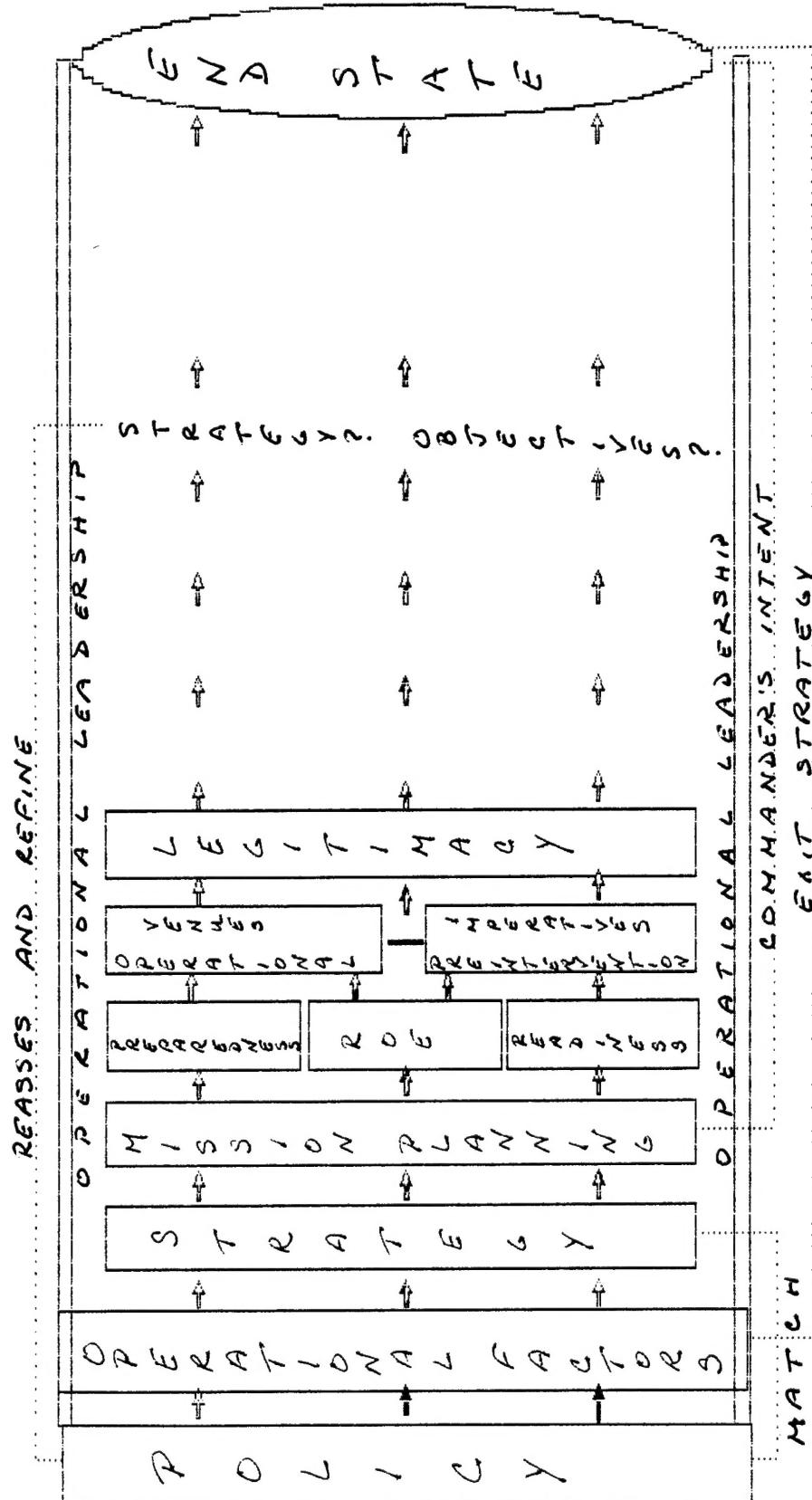
Chancellor Konrad Adenauer

**CRISIS OPERATIONS.** Lucien Poirier has described crisis as "an amorphous state between peace and war" and as "the period when armed conflicts incubate."<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, the Realist view that crisis emerges as a result of balance of power asymmetries, sovereignty issues and unbridled imperialism has prevailed in the Cold-War era of Realpolitik. Indeed, events like the Congo Crisis, the Berlin Crisis and even the Cuban Missile Crisis all fall into these categories. If Cold War era crises found their epicenter in broad power struggles, recent experiences in Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia and Liberia have demonstrated that while power remains a key causal factor, the prime currency of today's crises is instability, manifested in the harsh images of anarchy, starvation, genocide, disease and mass migrations of refugees across porous borders.

Preexisting conflicts stemming from tribalism, ethnic strife, religious animosities and territorial claims have supplanted the Cold War superpower

# OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR CRISES

CRISIS/PRE-INTERVENTION PHASE



## I. CRISIS PRE-INTERVENTION PHASE

struggles for hegemony and frequently provide the ideological rationale for crises to develop, intensify and fester into conflict. To extend Poirier's metaphor, it is the intensity of the crisis and the level of instability which ultimately decide the duration of the incubation period and the nature of a crisis. Operational leaders will often be the first to discern these asymmetries as they develop, as would-be manageable crises escalate into difficult-to-contain conflicts.

**PRE-INTERVENTION CONSIDERATIONS** (Figure 2 a.). If the past can serve as any guide, the vast majority of crises that U.S. forces are likely to be involved in the future will be of the "come-as-you-are" variety for which there are no standing policies, relevant strategies or doctrinal precedents. In today's "unconsummated wars"<sup>11</sup> and crises, it is increasingly apparent that operational leaders may have their greatest and most enduring influence well-prior to an intervention.

Because Leaders at the operational level today often find themselves directly engaged in these "crisis zones" prior to the actual intervention and are supported by national intelligence assets, they are normally acutely aware of the dynamics which color these emergent crises. If operational commanders are granted the necessary flexibility and wherewithal to act in these emergencies, they can often take active or passive measures to expeditiously contain and resolve them. How is this accomplished? First, strategic and operational perceptions of the situation must be synchronized; that is, the diplomatic desire to commit our armed forces must be aligned with the operational awareness of the dangers involved and capability to intervene effectively. Second, the proposed intervention must be judged as suitable, feasible and acceptable. In the final analysis, it may well be that the best option is *not* to intervene at all.

Perhaps the most dramatic change which has occurred in the realm of strategy has been a shift from sole responsibility for what has been called "Grand Strategy" in the hands of the strategic leadership to a shared responsibility with the

operational commander. The strategic impact of operational leadership has become an even more pervasive reality today than in years past. In addition to projecting military power, the operational commander must now also focus the full weight of economic, psychological, diplomatic and cultural forces toward a desired objective.<sup>3</sup> "Military strategy," as stated by Thomas Schelling, "whether we like it or not, has become the diplomacy of violence."<sup>4</sup> One may disagree with Schelling, but it is clear that the challenge of operational leadership has widened in scope and complexity, for it is the operational leader who, because of his presence and authority in the crisis area, often becomes the real executor of national policy and strategy. Major-General John MacInnis, who served as the UNPROFOR Deputy Commander from 1993 to 1994, writes:

The strategic-operational-tactical levels-of-conflict model...is not wholly transferable to peacekeeping endeavors. Virtually every decision made and course of action undertaken by senior UN commanders is likely to have both political and tactical overtones. The trilevel model becomes blurred beyond recognition.<sup>5</sup>

If the purpose of operational leadership in war is to gain and maintain freedom of action by "rob[bing] the enemy of his options while keeping open one's own...,"<sup>6</sup> in today's crisis operations, the main difficulty that arises is that *there may be no discernible enemy*. The role of the operational commander is frequently that of an intermediary, where the goal is to create or expand options that can help to resolve the crisis, or at least temporarily defuse it. An array of different strategies are available in these situations and are best employed when targeted with precision against causes, rather than symptoms. These strategies may be characterized as direct or indirect, cooperative or coercive and may also entail the execution of non-standard "maneuvers"--maneuvers which are political, economic and military in nature and which are interior and exterior in their scope.

**OPERATIONAL FACTORS: SPACE, FORCES & TIME.** In many insurgency and "failed

"state" scenarios, the factor of space is frequently mystified by national borders which exist only on paper and "enemy" activities which extend well-beyond the assigned operational areas of responsibility and influence.<sup>7</sup> In these situations, maintaining freedom of action in this medium will invariably require extending zones of action and zones of exclusion on the ground, at sea and in the air-- as UNPROFOR did in Bosnia by enforcing the UN No-Fly Zones, weapons embargo and safe areas. Extending the area over which operational influence can be actively enforced enhances the security of both friendly forces and non-combatants, while denying freedom of action to the antagonists.<sup>8</sup>

The ability to enforce these measures with flexible rules of engagement and a credible force, however, is a vital prerequisite, and has dramatic force protection implications as well. For example, following the air strike against Bosnian Serb artillery and armor in Pale in May 1995, General Ratko Mladic directed his army to take 378 UN peacekeepers hostage as an insurance policy against further NATO attacks. Only three months later, however, following the Srebrenica massacre and the fall of the UN safe area in Zepa, was NATO's operational paralysis (inflicted by the UN "dual key" veto policy) removed. Operation Deliberate Force was initiated by NATO's Southern Commander, Admiral Leighton Smith.

It is also crucial to understand that force composition (not only "how many" but "what kind") can play as dominant a role in defining the nature of the crisis as the overt threat itself. A stark example of this tendency occurred in Somalia following the transition between the U.S.-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) and the UN Organization in Somalia (UNOSOM II) during Operation Restore Hope. With the passage of UN Resolution 814 in March 1993, law enforcement, disarmament and nation building were officially mandated activities for the UNOSOM II force.<sup>9</sup> At the opposition of Generals Hoar (CINCENT) and Powell (CJCS), a 400-man U.S. joint special operations task force (JSOTF), consisting of 400 U.S. Army Rangers, and

special mission units, was sent to Mogadishu to hunt down and capture Mohammed Farah Aideed for the role he played in attacking UN troops. A compelling case can be made that the introduction of this JSOTF played a dominant role in shifting the mission focus away from humanitarian aid to a direct action orientation; and in fact, the composition of this force came to embody the growing U.S. involvement in Somalia's internal affairs. General Powell's subsequent post-mortem of the Somalia intervention reinforces this assessment:

We took risks in Somalia. We took risks in putting in Delta Force and the Rangers toward the end of our Somalian experience. Not for decisive purposes, but for the purpose of seeing if we could capture a warlord. It's not something I like doing, but I did it because the commander on the ground thought it was useful and our politicians wanted us to do it. That was our policy. It turned out to be unsuccessful. A failure.<sup>10</sup>

The factor of time assumes a more distinct and at times altogether different influence in crises and lower scale conflict operations. An operational commander's perception of when a crisis has transitioned to the other phases of conflict is crucial to how he will proceed in the future. In crises, therefore, operational leaders are confronted with two *temporal imperatives*: first, to define in advance what events or conditions must exist to cause a crisis to transition to conflict; and second, to determine the ways and means available to gain the freedom of action necessary to contain and deescalate the crisis. An operational commander's ability to identify these "zones of transition" early on ensures a proportioned intervention better equipped to prevent escalation and promote a timely resolution of the crisis.

This evolution is illustrated in the "Operational Phases & Transitions Model" in Figure 1. This model reflects the multitude of courses a crisis may take, and the transitions which the protagonists of a crisis experience must negotiate (consciously or not).

## **PRE-INTERVENTION IMPERATIVES**

*"Instead of the bloody business of hot war, we now have "infections," which are none the less lethal for being infectious. Surgery is not as a rule effective against infection and the disease must be taken early."*

Andre Beaufre

*"First, do no harm."*

Physician's Motto

Although looking ahead is, of course, seldom accomplished with any degree of precision, at times the decision to intervene may come as abruptly as the crisis erupts. There is no better example of this tendency than General John Shalikashvili's (then Supreme Allied Commander Europe) relief effort to rescue the Kurds from Saddam Hussein in Northern Iraq in April 1991. By creating safe havens, no-fly zones and providing humanitarian relief, Operation Provide Comfort has come to typify the short-notice joint and combined intervention efforts designed to "...intimidate, but not actually engage, potential aggressors."<sup>12</sup>

In these crises, operational leaders must depend predominantly on three pre-existing elements for mission success: readiness, preparedness and viable rules of engagement. Although commanders have a decisive influence on all three, only the last (rules of engagement) can be significantly influenced on short notice. Providing a high level of readiness and preparedness, with rules of engagement which are appropriate and flexible, stands as one of the most difficult challenges for an operational commander, because he must ensure these standards apply universally to all of the forces to be deployed-- to include those coalition members under his control. Lieutenant General Anthony Zinni's comments are particularly apt:

...you can't always go in with a force ideally tailored for this operation. What happens is that everybody comes running to the scene, and not necessarily with the ideal force composition. Coalitions are formed.... They come from the Third World; they come from a world that

grew up in a different doctrinal system; they come with different political motivations; they come with different rules of engagement-- which makes it interesting when the shooting begins.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, these tasks must be actualized and synergized across four venues-- in the air, on land, and in space-- and must be enforced by credible and viable rules of engagement (ROE).

**LEGITIMACY.** Operational commanders must plan their intervention strategy with a deliberate eye to establishing and maintaining the legitimacy of the entire effort. Legitimacy, as past interventions have shown, is an elusive and often fleeting quality which provides a commander and his force the necessary base of authority to intervene effectively and credibly. But while it is true that legitimacy can be achieved in part by the sanction of international laws, institutions and past precedents, these should be regarded as only initial sources of approbation in addressing the problem of the whole. Although it is relatively easy to initially gain some measure of legitimacy, enhancing and maintaining it over time is considerably more difficult and complex. Without an aggressive, proactive plan to enhance support for an intervention, its legitimacy is likely to slip away quickly and imperceptibly.

It is intriguing to consider that while the issue of maintaining legitimacy has traditionally been an NCA responsibility, once an intervention is initiated, the majority of this burden shifts instantaneously and tacitly to the operational commander who is fully engaged "on the ground." Maintaining--and indeed cultivating--public support in these scenarios has become one of the cardinal obligations of the operational commander. In the wake of our experience in Vietnam, the task of enhancing public support habitually focuses on the international and domestic support imperatives. Actively pursuing credibility with the host nation, however, remains an often overlooked dimension in this effort. In fact, it is precisely in this dimension that the phenomenon of "losing legitimacy"

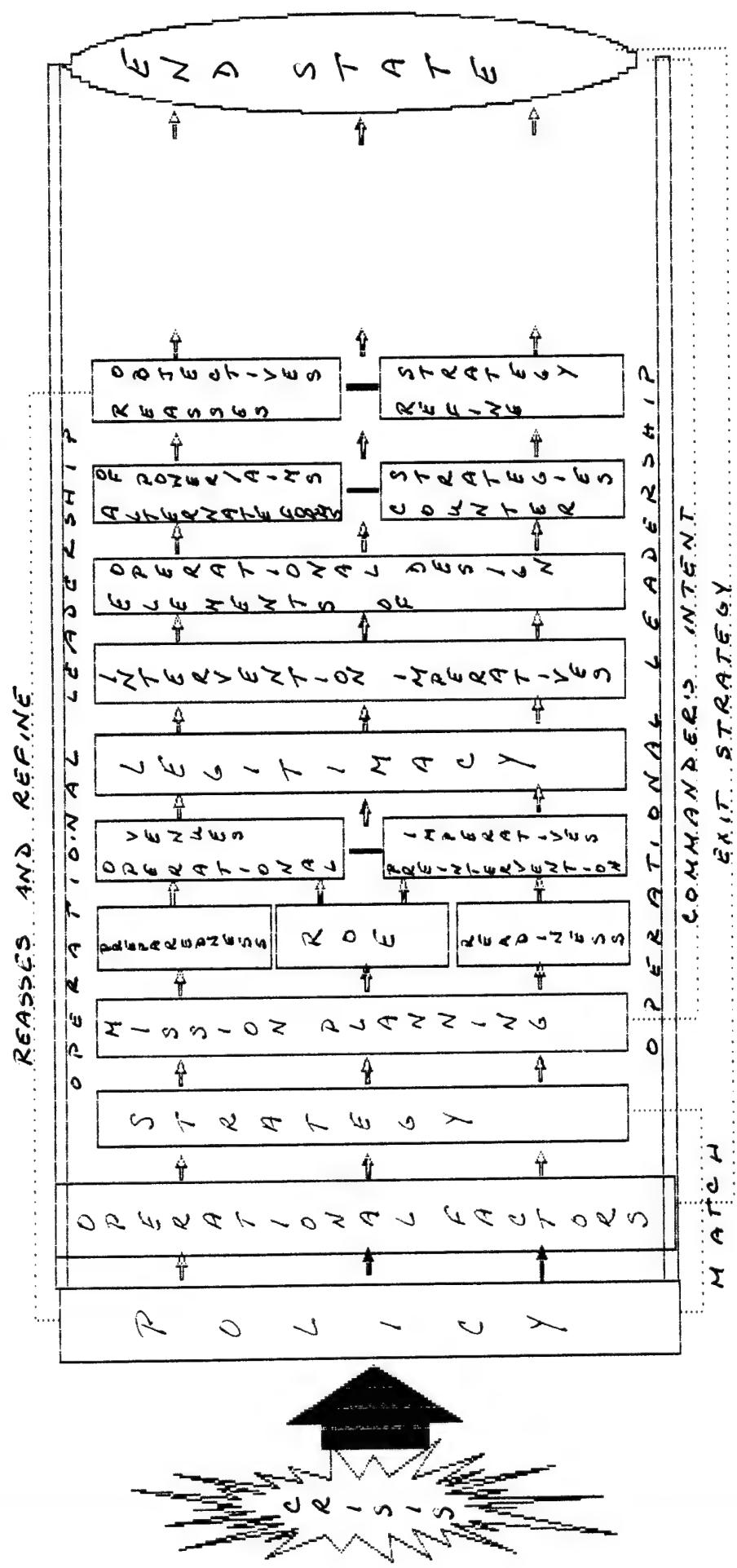
most often occurs.

The loss of legitimacy in a host nation can emerge as a result of legal breaches, non-proportional responses and the appearance of improbity or partiality. Legal breaches, even if they are isolated, create a similar backlash for an intervening force because they directly assail the very rationale used to justify the intervention. Non-proportionality frequently occurs when overwhelming or inappropriate force is employed; particularly when a proportioned, tailored and even non-coercive response at the outset would have enhanced the intervention's credibility and relevance. In 1992 General Powell presciently warned that "...military force is not always the right answer. If force is used imprecisely or out of frustration rather than clear analysis, the situation can be made much worse."<sup>14</sup> R.J. Rummel's guidance for proportionality, in his book The Conflict Helix, argues that for power to be proportionate it must also be relevant "to the interests at stake."<sup>15</sup>

A common misperception perpetuated by past peace operations assumes that to be neutral, an intervening force must be impartial as well. In reality, the efforts of an operational commander to be neutral or impartial in all his dealings with the protagonists of a crisis only serve to render him ineffectual in the long-term. Balancing the social and psychological impact of a territory's denial with the operational imperative to attain freedom of action frequently forestalls any well-intentioned attempts at impartiality or neutrality.<sup>16</sup> Judicious consideration, consistency and an even-handed approach toward the disputants in a crisis or conflict is, in practice, the only practical method that an operational commander can employ to achieve legitimacy. Doing so is often a tenuous balancing act but, at a minimum, requires that the commander ensure that the intervention on which he is embarked "affirms the legitimacy of the conflict."<sup>17</sup> Too often, by attempting to remain neutral, an intervention only acknowledges a conflict's existence.

# OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR CRISES

## INTERVENTION/CRISIS OPERATIONS PHASE



# I. CRISIS PRE-INTERVENTION PHASE

## II. INTERVENTION CRISIS OPERATIONS PHASE

## II. INTERVENTION AND CRISIS OPERATIONS

... [Alice] tried another question. "What sort of people live about here?" "In that direction," the Cat said, waving its right paw round, "lives a Hatter: and in that direction," waving the other paw, "lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad."

"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.

"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."

"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.

"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."

Alice in Wonderland

**INTERVENTION** (Figure 2 b.). When the need to intervene in another state's affairs becomes apparent, the time it takes to respond by deploying forces or delivering humanitarian assistance will often determine the relevance and ultimate effectiveness of the intervention. For instance, Larry Cable has argued that

the most effective and most efficient interventionary actions occur before social and political institutions have been totally disrupted, or before so many people have died that the dead are dictating policy.<sup>18</sup>

In concept, of course, intervening early is ideal; in execution, it is seldom achieved. By the time intervention is authorized and an operational force can be mobilized, sovereignty-survival issues in these states have often metastasized and civil authority has been completely eroded by subnational-sectarian violence.<sup>19</sup> And yet it is no small irony that while these situations are the most complicated and volatile in which to intervene, they have also become the most prevalent and recurrent.

**OPERATIONAL IMPERATIVES OF INTERVENTION.** There will be occasions where it is not possible to solve the root causes of a nation's problems by intervening in their affairs. When this is the case, it becomes the responsibility of the operational commander to first, control the "escalation of expectations" by informing the strategic leadership of what is within the realm of possibility early on-- preferably during his net assessment of the situation. (Horace's advice here, that "well-begun is half done," seems particularly cogent). A constrained

intervention with very specific and limited objectives can be conducted successfully, if an *a priori* announcement of the operation's intentions are made to the strategic leadership and the American people. Intentions must also be measurable and understandable. Imposing an unrealistic time limit on an operation at the outset can only undercut the operation's support and effectiveness in the long-term.

Additionally, the operational commander's ability to orchestrate activities in multiple venues to achieve incremental gains<sup>20</sup> and adapt his strategy to a dynamic environment will make mission success more probable. However elementary this tenet may seem in theory, its logic is frequently lost in practice. Many of our operational failures, in fact, can be traced precisely to a preoccupation with the traditional warfighting doctrine of fire and maneuver, and an inability to simultaneously adopt the parallel requirement to advance and adapt.<sup>21</sup> Particularly in the unconventional arena of insurgency, humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping, an operational commander must be able to transcend the tangible considerations which define traditional air, land and sea maneuver, and adapt them to the cultural, social and political realities "on-the-ground." The second imperative of intervention, therefore, is to properly *synchronize the elements of operational design*<sup>22</sup> during the course of an intervention and "maneuver" to a position of relevance. As priorities and situations shift, the operational commanders must recognize these changes in their abstract form,

Third, he must consistently *enforce a proportionality of means to ends*. By adapting his strategy to the population, an intervening force avoids extreme measures which may solve a problem in the short term at the expense of exacerbating existing tensions in the long term. Dr. Cable's comment that "the terrain that matters in internal war is the human terrain"<sup>23</sup> is salient to most crisis operations in which we find ourselves today. General Hugh Shelton, then Commanding

General of the XVIII Airborne Corps and commander of the Haiti intervention, made a concerted effort not to impose a solution on the local populace which could be interpreted as overtly American. Responding to one reporter's question concerning the problem of Haitian-on-Haitian violence, he answered simply, "we'll do everything in our power to prevent [it], but we can't change the culture of this country overnight."<sup>24</sup> Finally, and most importantly, an operational commander must make the effort to negotiate and if possible, to *control operational transitions as they occur*, from crisis to intervention, to resolution and to peace. Figure 1 graphically represents the operational variables (duration, scope, intensity and stability) which must be influenced during each phase of a crisis.

**OPERATIONAL THREATS & COUNTERSTRATEGIES.** The environmental hazards which confront operational leaders in crisis and peace comprise the same broad spectrum of threats which must be negotiated in conflict and war. Whether real or perceived, these threats provide the driving rationale to conduct crisis operations. The irony is that if done haphazardly, intervening in another state's affairs may manufacture additional threats which escalate tensions beyond preexisting levels.

Intervention of any kind, in its early stages, represents a dual escalation (see Figure 1 a.): first, for the intervening power who must place its prestige on the line; and second, for the protagonists of the crisis itself who must sacrifice their freedom of action and sovereignty for a solution to which none may be committed. Even in permissive environments, achieving these concessions is never a sure thing; and as our experiences in Lebanon and Somalia starkly remind us, once a military force intervenes, permissive environments can quickly transition into a hostile, non-permissive quagmires. The need for some level of "escalation dominance" ("having the capability to escalate a conflict to a level where an adversary cannot respond"<sup>25</sup>) is the prescription that is frequently invoked for

controlling these transitions. The Powell Doctrine is derived from this theory of escalation dominance. In his 1992 letter to the New York Times, General Powell explains:

Decisive means and results are always to be preferred, even if they are not always possible. So you bet I get nervous when so-called experts suggest that all we need is a little surgical bombing or a limited attack. When the desired result isn't obtained, a new set of experts then comes forward with talk of a little escalation. History has not been kind to this approach.<sup>26</sup>

In many situations where we intervene, however, a number of threats are left unaddressed by escalation dominance. By focusing exclusively on limiting escalation, for example, other more subtle--but no less dangerous--hazards may emerge.

Two of the most serious threats include protraction and substitution: while each are equally as formidable as escalation, they are both far less conspicuous in the way they manifest themselves. *Protraction* involves prolonging a crisis and is commonly accomplished when an adversary avoids set-piece confrontations, refuses to admit defeat, and adopts a strategy which is both sustained and indirect.

*Substitution* involves changing the nature of the crisis by devaluing existing operational objectives or by altering the environmental landscape itself. The danger which frequently occurs in the realm of mission planning is the failure to recognize or acknowledge changes in mission which occur as a result of internal decisions made in ignorance (mission creep) or from events which occur "despite the actions of the intervening country" (mission swing).<sup>27</sup> The most glaring example of *mission creep* in recent memory was our experience in Somalia. After UN Resolution 837 passed in March 1993, the Deputy UNOSOM II Commander, Major General Thomas Montgomery continued to press for Aideed's capture. Without General Montgomery's support for this mission, it almost certainly would not have been pursued. Later, however, during his congressional testimony, General Montgomery stated:

...my mission never changed from March forward. Officially it never changed. The situation changed considerably. ...There was another resolution, Resolution 837...that changed the nature of the Somali mission. ...The other thing that changed it simply was the fact that we were attacked. We were under attack from June 5, increasingly after that, by a hostile militia force that engaged in essentially urban guerilla warfare.<sup>28</sup>

General Montgomery's implication that his own decisions had no influence on the situation and that the UNOSOM II mission transformation occurred wholly as the result of *mission swing* is perplexing at the very least.

One of war's enduring lessons is that the strategies of substitution and protraction--by their very nature--are not susceptible to broad and sweeping concepts of dominance. In the final analysis, it may be precisely this fact that makes successful crisis management such an elusive and difficult task as the art of operational leadership is eclipsed by theories of information and escalation dominance. How, then, can these threats be effectively addressed? General MacInnis' prescription for a conflict strategy is equally relevant to crises:

The first and greatest challenge is to produce a strategy that recognizes warning signs; takes preventive measures; engages in conflict resolution activities or, at the very least, activities that moderate the effects of conflict; and follows up with a postconflict agenda to reduce the risk of relapse. This process must be recognized as a continuum of effort, demanding coherence, consistency, perseverance, and endurance.<sup>29</sup>

Too often, however, commanders rely solely on coercive strategies which maximize the use of conventional force. Employed judiciously and proportionally, strategies which employ other forms of power (authoritative, intellectual, altruistic, manipulative, cooperative, identitive, assertive, physical)<sup>30</sup> and which seek different aims (deterrence, denial, control)<sup>31</sup> may be far more successful in dealing with substitution-protraction threats, by "paralyzing the enemy by a multitude of deterrent checks, somewhat as the Lilliputians tied up Gulliver."<sup>32</sup>

**REFINE & REASSESS.** How, in real terms, can an operational commander determine what is proportional and appropriate to the situation? At what point has a crisis become a conflict? And when, for instance, does a peacekeeping mission become a

peace enforcement operation? Each of these questions falls squarely into the realm of operational art and rarely can be addressed with any measure of certainty or objectivity. A fatal error, however, is not to ask these questions<sup>33</sup> at all. The act of refining strategy and reassessing objectives during each phase of a crisis is the operational commander's best available tool to keep an intervention on-course.

### III. CRISIS RESOLUTION OPERATIONS

*"Call it war, and having done so, act accordingly."*

A.J. Bacevich, et al.

**CRISIS RESOLUTION & WAR TERMINATION** (Figure 2 c). Of all the activities which armed interventionary forces are required to conduct, the most difficult may well be those which occur during the War Termination phase of a crisis or conflict. The Crisis Resolution/War termination period may be the most dangerous and volatile of all the phases, as antagonists struggle to negotiate from positions of strength and advance their own agendas through unconventional and often violent means. It is also certainly the most politically charged of all the phases as emotions intensify and expectations escalate over time.

The risks and sacrifices required in the Crisis Resolution phase are inherently immense and therefore, have compelling force protection implications for the intervening force as well. As Lucien Poirier has indicated:

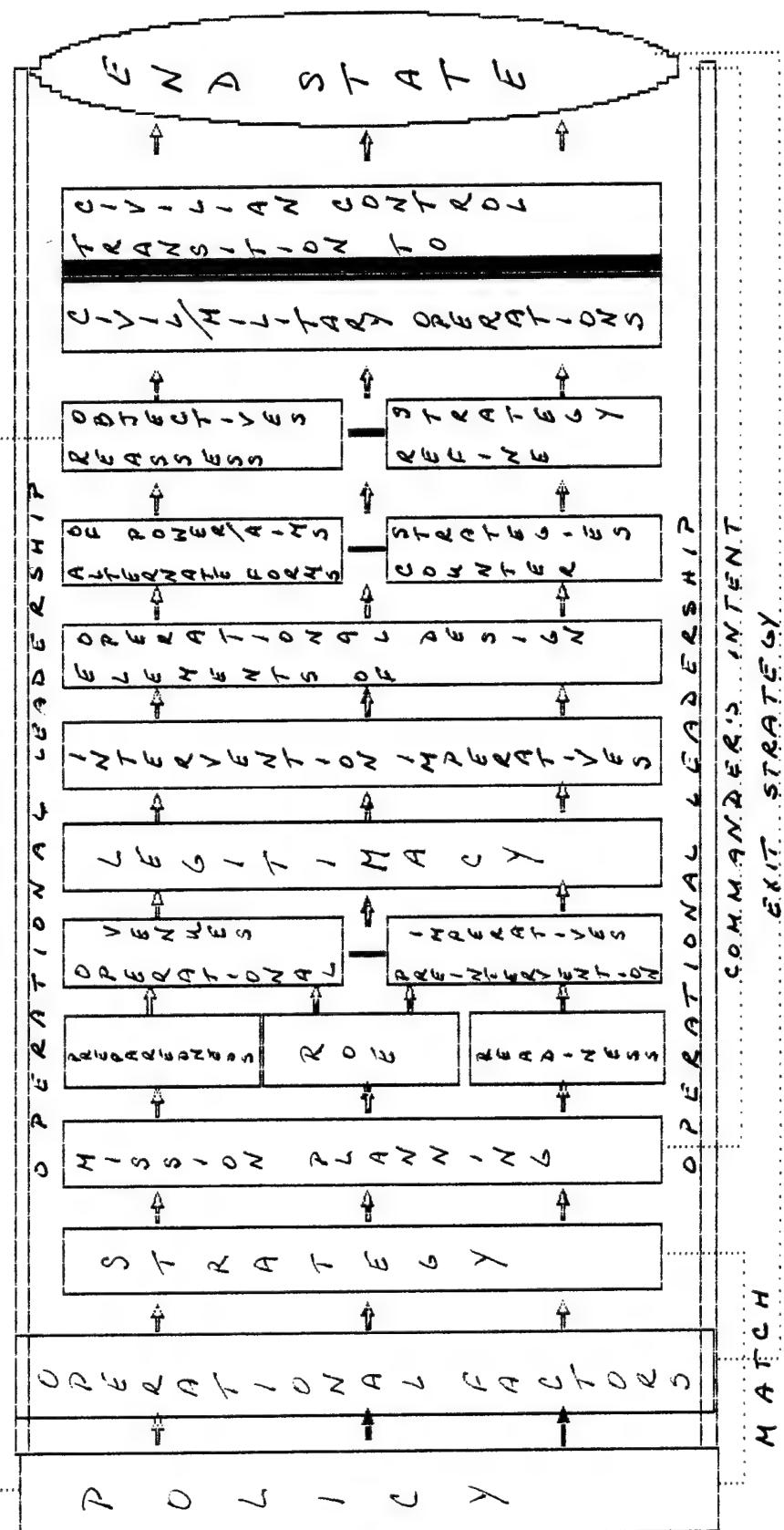
In most cases, the internationalization of regional disputes and the interested interference of the great powers resolve the crisis in ways, with means and through a compromise that hardly satisfies the parties directly engaged on the ground"<sup>34</sup>

A crisis intervention is particularly vulnerable to mission creep/swing, escalation or protraction during the Crisis Resolution phase. The danger of a crisis transitioning to Conflict during this phase is illustrated at Figure 1 b, and is

# OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR CRISSES

## CRISIS RESOLUTION PHASE

ASSESSES AND REFINES



F.  
CRISIS  
REINTERVENTION  
PHASE

II.  
INTERVENTION  
CRISIS OPERATIONS  
PHASE

III.  
CRISIS  
RESOLUTION  
PHASE

representative of our experience in Somalia. Following the successful humanitarian intervention conducted by General Zinni and UNITAF, and driven by a new U.S. policy of "assertive multilateralism," UN Resolution 814 was passed "to assume responsibility for the consolidation, expansion and maintenance of a secure environment throughout Somalia," and further sought "the rehabilitation of the political institutions and economy of Somalia."<sup>35</sup> Madelaine Albright, in her capacity as the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, then proclaimed

With this resolution, we will embark on an unprecedented enterprise aimed at nothing less than the restoration of an entire country as a proud, functioning and viable member of the community of nations.<sup>36</sup>

Referring specifically to the UNOSOM II intervention, Richard Betts cogently concludes that "international forces should not mix in the dangerous business of determining who governs without expecting deadly opposition."<sup>37</sup>

It is perhaps too facile an approach to simply advocate the need for an exit strategy or to continue to visualize the intended end state from Pre-Intervention to the Crisis Resolution phase. The lesson here, however, is that to the extent that a meaningful exit strategy can be formulated in the vacuum of unknown events, operational commanders must make the effort to formulate and refine a coherent and realistic exit plan during all stages of crisis. Past experience has shown that it is best for an interventionary force to be drawn down incrementally in order to reduce the possibility of violence in the future. Joint Pub 3-07 states: "The manner in which U.S. Forces terminate their involvement may influence the perception of the legitimacy of the entire operation...."<sup>38</sup> More importantly, though, it can also influence the *outcome* of a crisis.

Finally, the operational commander must be prepared for some level of tension<sup>39</sup>, while allowing the core issues of a crisis to be addressed in diplomatic venues following the transition to civil authority.<sup>40</sup> In this way, and if managed

effectively, even a tenuous peace can prevent a future war.

#### IV. PEACE AND STABILITY

*"If you don't pay attention to the periphery, the periphery changes. And the first thing you know the periphery is the center."*

Dean Rusk

**MAINTAINING THE PEACE** (Figure 2 d.) The ideal resolution of a crisis is for the original desired end state to be realized in all four operational venues (air, ground, sea, space). However difficult or improbable such an outcome may be in practice, figure 2 d. depicts this result. Attaining the measure of proportion and stability necessary to secure peace emerges as the core challenge for operational leaders today. Managing the asymmetries which erupt between expectations and power, and between impartiality and justice will ultimately determine the nature of the peace--just as it determines the nature of a war.<sup>41</sup> Achieving an equilibrium between these variables over time is a monumental task in any environment, to include peace. Operational commanders, once exclusively concerned with warfighting, have now assumed the difficult task of diplomacy as well. General Zinni's own experience confirms this assessment:

I'm an infantryman of 30 years standing. Nowhere in my infantry training did anybody prepare me for all this. I've been seconded to ambassadors twice in my career--once in the former Soviet Union during Operation Provide Hope and once in Somalia during Operation Continue Hope, where I put on civilian clothes and became an assistant to an ambassador-at-large....<sup>42</sup>

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

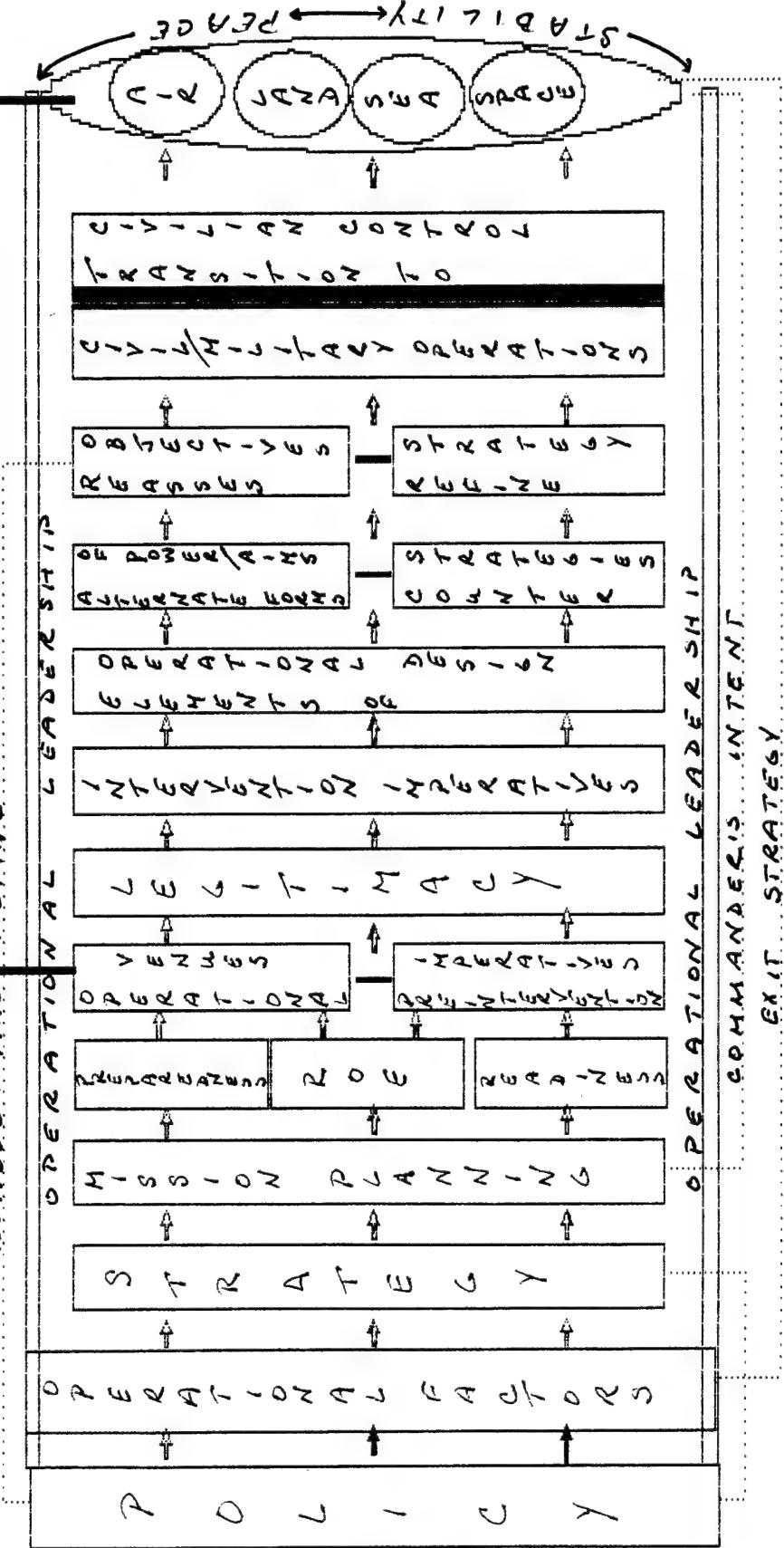
*"One thing we've learned is that an operation other than war in no way implies an absence of conflict."* MG William Nash

Our disastrous interventions in Lebanon in 1983 and ten years later in Somalia shattered our traditional perceptions of crises as simply events to be resolved

# OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR CRISES

PEACE / STABILITY PHASE

REFINES AND SYNCHRONIZATION / ACTUALIZATION



I.  
CRISIS  
PRE-INTERVENTION  
PHASE

II.  
INTERVENTION  
CRISIS OPERATIONS  
PHASE

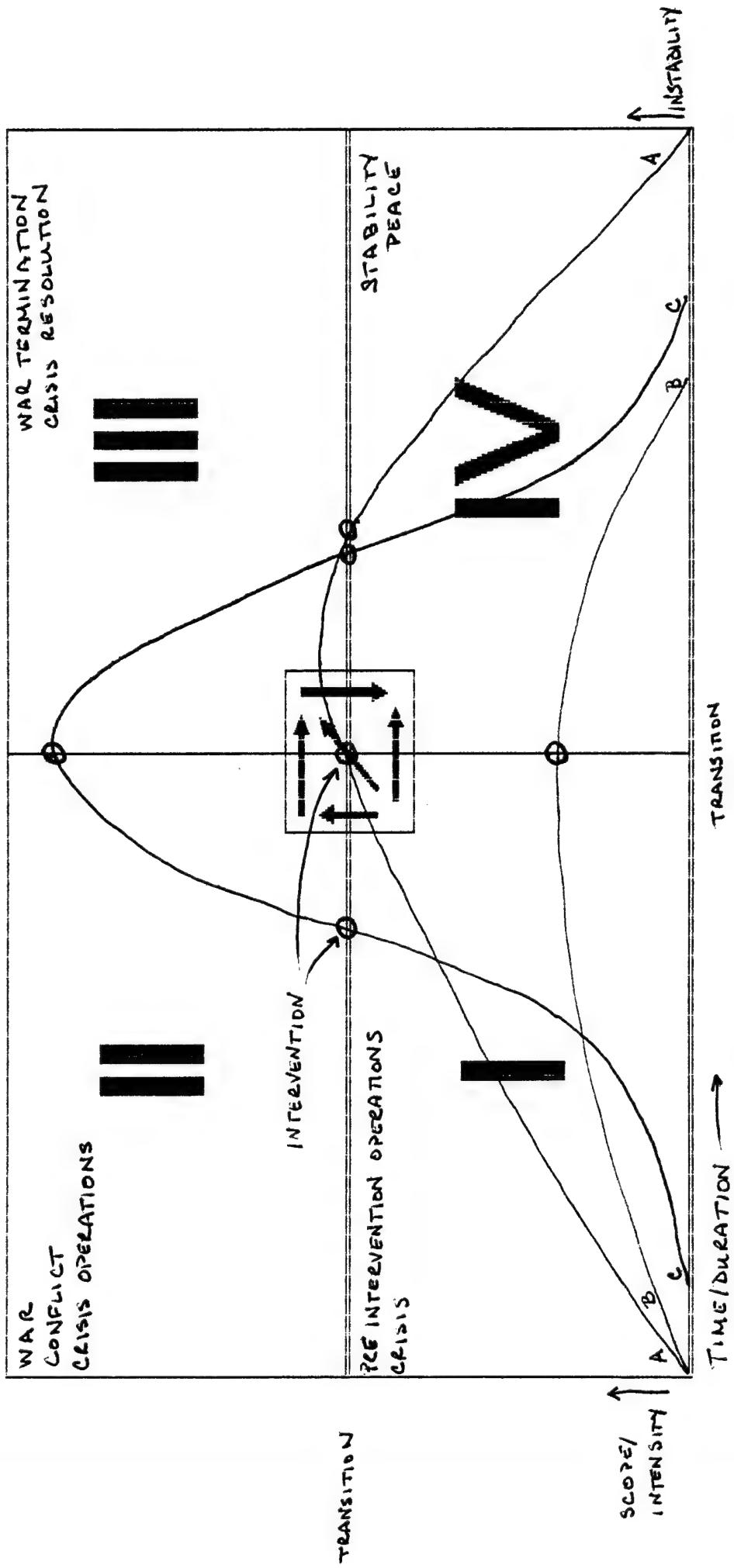
III.  
CRISIS  
RESOLUTION  
PHASE

IV.  
PEACE  
STABILITY  
PHASE

(quickly).<sup>43</sup> While our experience in conducting crisis operations has certainly increased over the years, our understanding of their causal dynamics and the use of our military forces to effectively address them has been provisional at best. Many critics of these interventions argue that perhaps this is all we can expect; indeed, every crisis we face will be inherently different than the last. But this is a self-limiting view. As we discern the lessons from these past operations, a multitude of common threads can be found which do provide some reason for optimism.

As this paper has argued, at least three of these "threads of optimism" are particularly significant. The first is that crises are not simply chaotic events, but have definite phases which can be positively influenced toward a desired outcome, given the proper approach. Second, the influence which an intervention exercises in a crisis environment is dictated largely by the commander's mastery of a series of systemic and intuitive leadership imperatives. The last and most important of these ocnclusions is that the operational commander does have the ability to favorably affect the outcome of any given crisis. Contrary to cynical belief, future failures are *not* inevitable.

# OPERATIONAL PHASES & TRANSITIONS

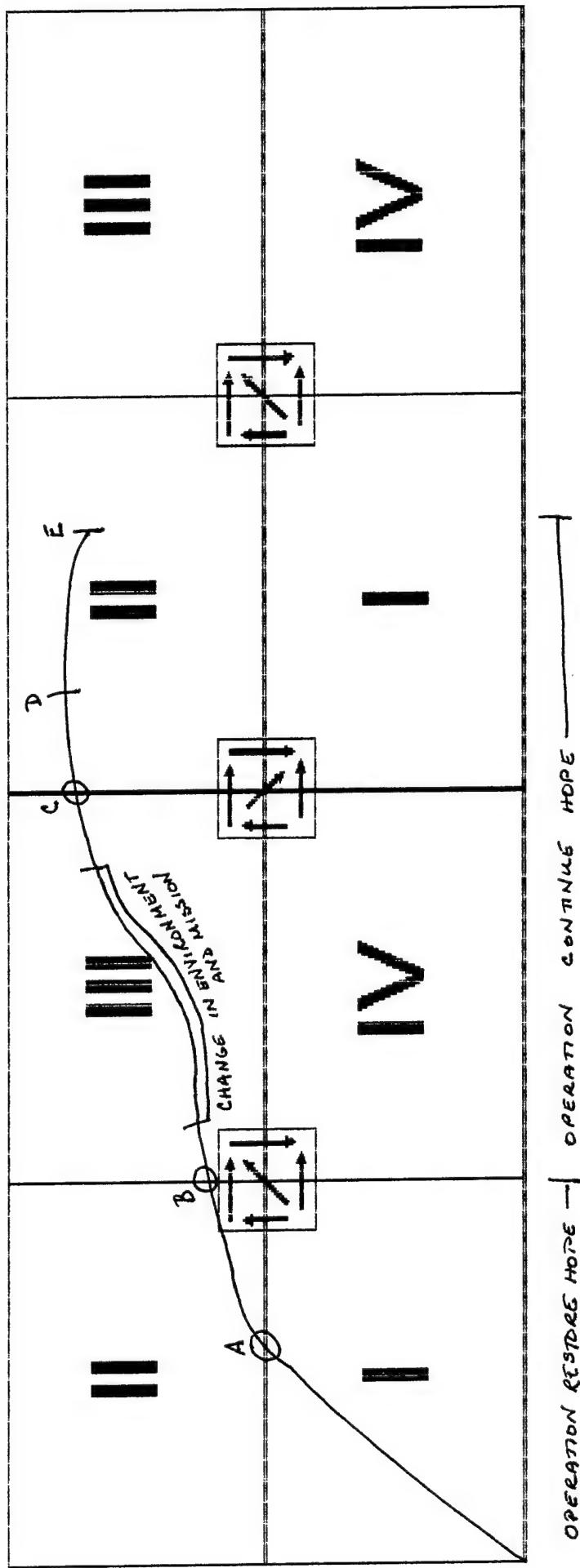


Legend:

- = TRANSITIONS BETWEEN OPERATIONAL PHASES
- A = CRISIS TRANSITIONS DIRECTLY TO CRISIS RESOLUTION + STABILITY (GRADUAL ESCALATION) (INTERVENTION)
- B = CRISIS TRANSITIONS TO STABILITY (MINIMAL ESCALATION) (NO INTERVENTION)
- C = CRISIS TRANSITIONS TO CONFLICT APPROACHING WAR (HIGH ESCALATION) (INTERVENTION)

# OPERATIONAL PHASES & TRANSITIONS

## SUBSTITUTION/PROTRACTION EFFECTS



O = TRANSITION + ESCALATION POINTS:

- A • UNITAF INTERVENTION
- B • UNISON II INTERVENTION
- C • INTRODUCTION OF TASK FORCE RANGER
- D • TF RANGER RAID
- E • U.S. WITHDRAWAL

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>John A. McInnis, "Peacekeeping and Postmodern Conflict: A Soldier's View," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, (Spring 1995):29.

<sup>2</sup>Lucien Poirier, "Elements of a Theory of Crisis," in *The Art of War in World History*, ed. Gerard Chaliand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1057.

<sup>3</sup>Andre Beaufre, "Indirect Strategy in the Nuclear Age," in *The Art of War in World History*, ed. Gerard Chaliand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1040.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas C. Schelling, "The Diplomacy of Violence," in *The Art of War in World History*, ed. Gerard Chaliand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1022.

<sup>5</sup>McInnes, 34.

<sup>6</sup>Milan Vego, "Operational Factors," NWC 4092, p.1, United States Naval War College Operations Department, Newport, September 1996.

<sup>7</sup>Beaufre, 1025, 1039.

<sup>8</sup>Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 185.

<sup>9</sup>Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *U.S. Military Operations in Somalia: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services*, 103rd Cong., 2d sess., 12, 21 May 1994, 30, 37 and 43; Jennifer Morrison Taw and John E. Peters, "Operations Other Than War: Implications for the U.S. Army," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 6 (Winter 1995): 382-383; Rick Atkinson, "The Raid That Went Wrong: How an Elite U.S. Force Failed in Somalia," *Washington Post*, January 30, 1994.

<sup>10</sup>Lisa Zeff, prod. *Colin Powell: A Soldier's Campaign* (New York: A&E Home Video, 1995), VHS Biography.

<sup>11</sup>Paul Seabury and Angelo Coderilla, *War: Ends and Means* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1989), 272.

<sup>12</sup>Special Report, "Globo-Cops," *Newsweek*, August 23, 1993, .

<sup>13</sup>Anthony Zinni, "It's Not Nice and Neat," *Proceedings* (August 1995):30.

<sup>14</sup>Colin L. Powell, "Why Generals Get Nervous," *The New York Times*, October 8, 1992, sec A, p. 35; This "Letter to the Editor" outlined what came to be known as "The Powell Doctrine." Powell's warning about using force out of frustration is particularly relevant to the UNOSOM II hunt for Aideed. Atkinson's article, "The Raid That Went Wrong," provides an extraordinary narrative of events leading up to, and including, the fateful 3 October 1993 raid conducted by Task Force Ranger. Atkinson relates the response of the Task Force Commander, General William Garrison, after five of his soldiers were wounded by a Somali mortar round: he vowed "to kick somebody's ass," and requested the "...number-one target where

Aideed has been reported from time to time." It is also interesting that the term "overwhelming force", usually associated with the Powell Doctrine, is only alluded to in a historical civil war analogy concerning General McClellan's reluctance to use "the overwhelming force available to him to achieve a decisive result."

<sup>15</sup>R.J. Rummel, *The Conflict Helix* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 228.

<sup>16</sup>Impartiality and neutrality can be misunderstood concepts. General MacInnis makes the point that "there should be no question of peacekeepers being entirely neutral. They must, however, remain visibly impartial." He also writes: "The key difference between peacekeepers and peace enforcers...is their relationship with the parties of the conflict." (MacInnis, 36). Another senior U.S. officer with extensive experience in crisis operations, for instance, has argued that when such circumstances arise: "I can be even-handed without being impartial." (This quote originated from a Naval War College lecture, given under the condition of non-attribution).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 227.

<sup>18</sup>Larry Cable, "Straddling the Cultural Gaps: Special Forces in the Indirect Action Environment," *Special Warfare Magazine*, January 1996, 13.

<sup>19</sup>James G. Roche and George E. Pickett, Jr., "Organizing the Government to Provide the Tools for Intervention," in *U.S. Intervention Policy for the Post-Cold War World: New Challenges and New Responses*, ed. Arnold Kanter and Linton F. Brooks (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994), 204.

<sup>20</sup>This discussion of synchronization, incremental gains, fire and maneuver, and "advancing and adapting" only touches on the elements of Operational Design. Although the nuances of Operational Design in crisis operations may be unique in some cases, their relevance remains constant. The primary difference encountered in crisis scenarios is that these elements may at times manifest themselves in more abstract, less tangible forms. "Decisive points," for instance, may well be diplomatic achievements, ceasefires, etc. which the operational commander plays a key role in securing.

<sup>21</sup>General MacInnis argues similarly that "...commanders and staffs...must constantly be alert for opportunities, exploring new avenues of approach and new techniques and searching for ways to seize the initiative. They must, in other words, be looking for anything that allows them to move forward, even incrementally, toward an often unclear objective." (MacInnis, p. 35).

<sup>22</sup>Milan Vego, "Fundamentals of Operational Design," An Unpublished Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1995.

<sup>23</sup>Cable, 12.

<sup>24</sup>Richard B. Stolley, "Our Man in Haiti," *Life Magazine*, November 1994, 56.

<sup>25</sup>Harry G. Summers, Jr., *The New World Strategy: A Military Policy for America's Future* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 231.

<sup>26</sup>Powell, sec A, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup>Taw and Peters, 391.

<sup>28</sup>Congress, *Hearings*, 34.

<sup>29</sup>McInnis, 43.

<sup>30</sup>Rummel, 71.

<sup>31</sup>Pape, 12-19.

<sup>32</sup>Beaufre, 1026.

<sup>33</sup>For an excellent compendium of "operational questions for decision-makers," see: Richard Smoke, *War: Controlling Escalation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), Appendix A. The questions Smoke includes, although oriented toward issues of escalation control in war, nonetheless do provide an invaluable listing of questions which an operational commander must address at all spectrums of conflict, to include crisis.

<sup>34</sup>Poirier, 1057.

<sup>35</sup>John R. Bolton, "Wrong Turn in Somalia," *Foreign Affairs* 73 (January/February 1994): 272.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 272.

<sup>37</sup>Richard K. Betts, "The Delusion of Imperial Intervention," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 1994): 30-31.

<sup>38</sup>Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Pub 3-07: Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other than War* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1995), IV-12.

<sup>39</sup>Rummel, 244.

<sup>40</sup>Joint Chiefs of Staff, IV-12.

<sup>41</sup>Stephen R. Graubard, *Kissinger: Portrait of a Mind* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), 34; Betts, 30.

<sup>42</sup>Zinni, 29.

<sup>43</sup>For an example of the tendency to view crisis as an event, see: Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 255. In his seminal book, Allison writes: "From the basic conception of happenings as choices to be explained by reference to objectives...we must move to a conception of happenings as events whose determinants are to be investigated according to the canons that have been developed by modern science." This view runs exactly counter to the central thesis of this paper, which argues that if operational leadership is to be regarded as an art, crises must be seen as processes which can be influenced, rather than simply solved.

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